

For Immediate Release

March 7, 2001

This summer, the Dillon Field Office of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management will begin a four-year process to develop a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the 902,000 acres of public land and 1.3 million acres of mineral rights under the agency's jurisdiction in southwest Montana. The new RMP will allocate lands for appropriate uses and establish goals and objectives for resource conditions on those lands.

To ensure that the RMP meets the needs and interests of the public, the BLM has asked the Montana Consensus Council to involve public officials and citizens in designing a public participation process for the RMP effort. The Consensus Council is a small state agency that promotes the use of fair and effective processes to help people build agreement on natural resource and other public policy issues. The Council is impartial and nonpartisan; it is not an advocate for any interest or outcome. This spring, the Consensus Council will conduct a survey of people interested in the RMP process to determine how they want to participate in the planning process.

The Dillon Field Office will rely on new agency guidelines for developing RMPs, which include frequent opportunities for public participation. This effort will build on the Dillon area's long history of public participation and collaboration among agencies, interest groups, and the public.

For more information on the RMP planning process, contact the Dillon Field Office, 1005 Selway, Dillon, MT 59725, 406-683-2337. To learn more about the public participation process, contact Matt McKinney at the Montana Consensus Council, Room 233, State Capitol, Helena, Montana, 59620, 406-444-2075.

SIDEBAR

Planning Criteria

When developing plans to manage a resource, any agency faces a number of real-world constraints. Federal laws such as the Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act mandate certain management actions and restrict others. Budget and staff constraints may preclude some management activities. Other considerations or *planning criteria* also come into play.

To develop alternatives for consideration under the new Resource Management Plan, the Dillon Field Office has begun identifying specific planning criteria. These criteria may be modified based on public input and consultations with other agencies. The criteria fall into the following five general categories. For the purposes of the RMP, management alternatives must:

- Comply with applicable federal laws and regulations.
- Be achievable, given technological, budget, and staffing limits.
- Be compatible with the plans and mandates of other agencies that share jurisdiction in the region.
- Recognize existing and desired resource conditions.
- Integrate and accommodate local, statewide, and national interests.